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Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 09852 221614Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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O 221604Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BRUSSELS 09852

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS-2
TAGS: MOPS, CG, BE
SUBJECT: SHABA INVASION: BELGIANS PROPOSE CREATION
OF AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE TO PROVIDE SECURITY IN SHABA

1. BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SIMONET CALLED ME IN 1500L MAY 22 TO ASK IF THE UNITED STATES WOULD SUPPORT OR PARTICIPATE IN THE FORMATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE TO PROVIDE SECURITY FOR SHABA. HE TOLD ME BELGIANS HAVE INTELLIGENCE REPORT THAT KATANGANS INTEND TO INVADE SHABA AGAIN AS SOON AS THE BELGIAN AND FRENCH FORCES LEAVE. HE SAID IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE WEST TO KEEP THE ZAIRIAN ECONOMY WORKING AND THAT KEY TO THE ZAIRIAN ECONOMY IS SHABA. FOREIGN EXPERTS AND TECHNICIANS ARE INDISPENSABLE TO KEEP THE SHABAN ECONOMY RUNNING, BUT THESE EXPERTS WILL LEAVE AND NOT RETURN IF THEIR BASIC SECURITY NEEDS ARE NOT ASSURED.

2. SIMONET TOLD ME THAT THE BELGIAN CABINET WOULD MEET AGAIN TONIGHT TO CONFIRM DECISION TO KEEP SOME BELGIAN FORCES IN SHABA WHILE WITHDRAWING "THE BULK". STATING THAT BELGIUM CANNOT LEAVE SHABA ON ITS OWN, SIMONET
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OUTLINED FOLLOWING OPTIONS FOR PROVIDING THE NECESSARY SECURITY IN SHABA:

A. THE FAZ TO PROVIDE FOR THE SAFETY OF FOREIGN TECHNICIANS. HE SAID THIS OPTION WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION FOR THE PRESENT TIME WITH THE FAZ IN SUCH DISARRAY.

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B. AN INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN FORCE, PERHAPS UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE OAU. SIMONET RECOGNIZED THAT THERE IS ALREADY EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION IN PROGRESS ABOUT THE FORMATION OF SUCH A FORCE AND SAID THAT GETTING BLACK AFRICANS INVOLVED IN HEMISPHERIC SECURITY QUESTIONS HAD OBVIOUS POLITICAL MERIT.

C. AN INTERNATIONAL WESTERN FORCE.

D. A FRENCH-BELGIAN FORCE. SIMONET STRESSED THE POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES FOR HIS GOVERNMENT WITH THIS OPTION, SAYING THAT THE BELGIAN PEOPLE WILL GO ALONG FOR A WHILE WITH THE IDEA OF PROTECTING BELGIAN CITIZENS, BUT THAT BELGIAN PUBLIC OPINION WOULD NOT ACCEPT A POLICY PERCEIVED AS SHORING-UP THE MOBUTU REGIME.

3. I ASKED SIMONET HOW LONG HE ANTICIPATED AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE WOULD BE NEEDED IN SHABA. HE REPLIED THAT SUCH A FORCE WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR AS LONG AS IT TAKES FOR MOBUTU TO GET THE FAZ IN SHAPE TO PROVIDE FOR THE SECURITY OF SHABA. I ASKED ABOUT A POSSIBLE UN ROLE, AND HE REPLIED THAT IDEA WOULD BE FULLY EXPLORED SINCE GOAL IS TO ESTABLISH THE WIDEST POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION.
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4. I ASKED HIM WHAT KIND OF U.S. ROLE WAS ENVISIONED. HE ANSWERED THAT IDEALLY THE U.S. SHOULD JOIN THE FORCE AND SEND TROOPS. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD U.S. CONSTRAINTS AND THOUGHT THAT, AT MINIMUM, U.S. COULD PROVIDE OTHER KINDS OF SUPPORT, INCLUDING A POLITICAL PLEDGE OF SUPPORT TO THE IDEA. HE SAID THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT WANTED A SWIFT REPLY TO THE FOLLOWING TWO QUESTIONS:

A. DOES USG THINK CONCEPT OF SETTING UP AN INTERNA-TIONAL FORCE IS "REALISTIC"?

B. WILL THE U.S. PARTICIPATE?

5. SIMONET SAID HE DID NOT KNOW THE INTENTIONS OF THE FRENCH AND HAD JUST RAISED THE SUBJECT OF AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR BEFORE I ARRIVED. HE SAW BRITISH CHARGE RIGHT AFTER US AND MADE SIMILAR APPROACH.

6. MINISTRY OF DEFENSE HAS MADE SIMILAR APPROACH TO DAO WHO IS REPORTING SEPARATELY. CHAMBERS

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